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House of Representatives

STATEMENT OF CONGRESSMAN ED CASE OF HAWAII TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 2005

HAWAII WATER RESOURCES ACT OF 2005

Madam Speaker, I rise today in strong support of prompt passage of S. 264, the Hawaii Water Resources Act of 2005. Congressman ABER-CROMBIE and I co-introduced a companion bill in the House, H.R. 843. The bill is identical to one that passed the Senate in the 108th Congress by unanimous consent.

S. 264 amends the Reclamation Wastewater and Groundwater Study and Facilities Act to authorize three important water reclamation projects in my State. The three projects authorized in S. 264 would help Hawaii better manage its water resources, particularly in key areas where water is becoming increasingly scarce.

Two of the projects are in my Second District on the islands of Hawaii and Maui, and the third, which would provide a reliable source of potable water for the island of Oahu, also impacts my district, which includes most of that island except for urban Honolulu. The Honolulu Board of Water Supply has projected that on Oahu freshwater use will exceed recharge rates by 2018.

The project on Oahu would provide a reliable source of water through resource diversification to meet existing and future water demands in the Ewa area of Oahu, where water demands are exceeding the availability of drinking water. The proposed project is a 5 million gallon-per-day seawater desalination facility. Seawater Reverse Osmosis Membrane Technology is proposed, in which approximately 11 million gallons per day

of seawater are needed to produce 5 million gallons per day of potable water.

The second project, north of Kona on the island of Hawaii, would address the issue of effluent being discharged into a temporary disposal sump from the Kealahou Wastewater Treatment Plant. The effluent has a particularly high suspended solids content. The proposed project will utilize subsurface wetlands to reduce the suspended solids prior to disinfection. Retrofitting an existing lagoon and completing construction of an additional lagoon would create subsurface wetlands. An open surface wetland would also be constructed to reduce the effluent disposal, create habitat for two endangered species, and provide recreational opportunities for the public. Once the effluent water quality has been upgraded and the maximum amount of flow diverted for use onsite in the constructed wetlands, a distribution system would be needed to convey the recycled water to potential users.

The final project, in Lahaina on the island of Maui, would facilitate the use of recycled water by extending the County of Maui's main recycled water pipeline. The county has been one of the water recycling leaders in the State of Hawaii, but increased use of recycled water is limited by the lack of adequate infrastructure to distribute recycled water to additional users.

Hawaii has been experiencing drought conditions since 1998. And the National Weather Ser-

vice has indicated that due to a mild El Nino effect in the Pacific Ocean, Hawaii may again experience another period of drought. Although many people have an image of Hawaii as a lush, tropical rainforest, in fact the leeward sides of all of our islands are typically dry, not unlike the high desert conditions in the western United States. A 2003 GAO report placed Hawaii among 16 States that are expected to face regional freshwater shortages in the next decade.

S. 264 builds on Senator Akaka's Hawaii Water Resources Act of 2000 (P.L. 106-566) that authorized the Bureau of Reclamation to survey irrigation and water delivery systems in Hawaii and identify new opportunities for reclamation and reuse of water and wastewater for agriculture and non-agricultural purposes. That act resulted in the development of the initial Hawaii Drought Plan in 2000, which was updated this past year to incorporate comments and recommendations made by the Bureau of Reclamation. The expertise of the Bureau of Reclamation has been invaluable in helping our State to address these vital resource issues.

I urge my colleagues to support this important bill.